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EDITORIAL NOTES

The recent movement looking toward the organization and development of industrial education as a part of our system of popular education has brought out clearly the importance of the subject. We may confidently look forward to a period of discussion and experiment resulting from the present agitation. It would be a wise man who could foretell just what the outcome will be. Meanwhile, it may not be amiss to consider the situation in our secondary schools likely to be affected by any changes in the direction indicated.

REFORMS IN THE CURRICULUM OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Secondary education in America is just now reaching the close of a period of marked reconstruction extending roughly over a quarter of a century. At the beginning of this period there was the clear recognition of the need of regarding secondary education not merely as a preparation for college or the professional school but as designed to furnish to pupils of high-school age the kind of training that their development as members of society would in the nature of things demand. Two obstacles were felt to stand in the way of reform, the narrow traditional curriculum and the influence of the college which made departure from that curriculum extremely difficult. A similar situation in the colleges had been met by the introduction of the elective system. History repeats itself in the case of the secondary schools. The sciences, modern languages, manual training, domestic science, and drawing became parts of our accepted high-school curriculum. It is interesting to note that the colleges, despite the fact that they had a like experience, were not always found on the side of those who struggled for the recognition of these new subjects by the high schools. Today at the close of the period these new subjects are generally recognized and accepted by the colleges. A second feature of the progress of this period is the development of the unit system and the definition of the various units made by different committees of our educational associations and learned societies. Our textbooks, too, have been rewritten to accord with the demands thus formulated. Along with these changes there has come an elevation in our standards of scholarship, particularly in history and the sciences, in keeping with the great advance made in our colleges in the teaching of these subjects.

Recognizing to the full, however, the great gain marked by the changes indicated above, one familiar with the situation is forced to ask himself whether secondary education is any more free to consider and solve its own problems than it was twenty-five years ago and whether the elective system and the addition of new subjects have led to an educational organization of our secondary schools that secures the highest efficiency. The writer makes bold to maintain that, in spite of the changes which were, perhaps, the only possible next step, the secondary school is now as before

under the unwarranted domination of the colleges and that a real educational solution of the problem of secondary education has not been reached.

Let us consider the two great changes effected during the period just drawing to a close. The elective system was defensible only as a military measure. As long as the old curriculum held the field and *THE ELECTIVE SYSTEM* occupied the time of a student who desired to follow it, the new subjects could come in only as electives and for those who wished to depart from the old. The new subjects had to be organized, the technique of instruction had to be worked out, teachers had to be trained, before the educational value of the subjects could be assured. Now that these results have been attained, the secondary school is face to face with the fact that the election is, after all, not free either for the student who wishes to enter college or for the school that prepares for college. Each college makes its own peculiar grouping of subjects for admission and always from the standpoint of the courses which the college offers. This is especially true of colleges for women, many of which emphasize languages to the disadvantage of other subjects. It would be difficult to find any rational explanation of the groupings of our college-admission requirements other than the design of letting students into college with different types of preparation which the college can without inconvenience carry on under its existing organization. It is the college, now as twenty-five years ago, that controls.

The other great feature of our recent development is the unit system. As a temporary measure looking toward definiteness and uniformity, the system *THE UNIT SYSTEM* may have its justification. But educationally it is of extremely doubtful value. As it actually operates it is a positive obstacle and a further proof of the control exercised directly or indirectly by the colleges. It has forced the secondary schools to arrange its curriculum so as to break up continuity which is absolutely fundamental for the educational development of the student. It may be of advantage to the college to have a pupil study a subject for a full school year and to cover a definite ground. It may be vastly better for the student to have studied the subject but one or two periods a week for three or four years and to have made an entirely different selection and use of material than the one prescribed by the colleges.

The pressing need of the hour is that the colleges should accept the students from the high schools on a certificate of maturity which shall vouch for their ability to do the work of the college and shall state *THE NEED OF THE HOUR* just what the student has studied. Then the secondary school should attempt to work out a curriculum on educational lines. It should ask itself whether a boy or girl can be educated in the largest sense who omits during four most important years a continuous contact with those phases of human thought and endeavor that pass under the names of history, language, and literature, science, art, and industry. Our present secondary education is a chaos.

W. B. O.